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Security Council

Fifty-fourth Year

Provisional

3984th Meeting

Friday, 26 February 1999, 11.10 a.m.

New York

President:	Fowler	(Canada)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Petrella
	Bahrain	Mr. Buallay
	Brazil	Mr. Valle
	China	Mr. Chen Xu
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Gabon	Mr. Dangue Réwaka
	Gambia	Mr. Jagne
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. Kooijmans
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Slovenia	Mr. Türk
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Burleigh

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (S/1998/1203/Add.1)

Fourth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (S/1999/98)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Third report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (S/1998/1203 and Add.1)

Fourth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (S/1999/98)

The President (*interpretation from French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Japan, Kenya, Senegal and Togo, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Poukré-Kono (Central African Republic) took a seat at the Council table; Mme. Kaba Camara (Côte d'Ivoire), Mr. Elaraby (Egypt), Mr. Takasu (Japan), Mr. Mahugu (Kenya), Mr. Ka (Senegal) and Mr. Kpotsra (Togo) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*interpretation from French*): The Security Council will now begin its considération of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. Members of the Council have before them the third and fourth reports of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic, which are contained in documents S/1998/1203 and Addendum 1 and S/1999/98, respectively. Members of the Council also have before them document S/1999/122, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, France, Gabon, Japan, Kenya, Senegal, Togo and the United States of America.

I should like to draw the attention of members of the Council to the following other documents: S/1999/116 and S/1999/121, letters dated 22 December 1998 and 4 February 1999, respectively, from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council; S/1999/132, letter dated 9 February 1999 from the Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of the Central African Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council; and S/1999/200, letter dated 24 February 1999 from the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

(*spoke in English*)

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I shall first give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): The draft resolution that we shall be adopting on the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) marks an important stage in the pursuit of the process of peace and national reconciliation begun in January 1997 with the conclusion of the Bangui Agreements.

MINURCA has made significant achievements since the beginning of its deployment on 15 April 1998. The gains of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB) have been preserved, and the Central African Republic has remained, as the Secretary-General states in his 18 December 1998 report, "an island of relative stability in an otherwise war-torn region". *(S/1998/1203, para. 38)*

The successful holding of legislative elections on 22 November and 13 December 1998 was also an important stage in the reestablishment of national institutions which had been almost entirely destroyed by the successive rebellions that battered the country in 1996. It would be regrettable if the success of these elections were now tarnished by sterile political quarrels.

The formation, during the holding of these elections, of the first restructured unit of the Central African armed

forces and the continuation of the demobilization programme supported by the United Nations Development Programme were two encouraging signs of the will of the Central African authorities to restructure their military forces.

This satisfactory progress, however, should not obscure the fact that serious difficulties remain. It would be a grave mistake for Central African authorities and political leaders of any stripe to believe that the simple presence of MINURCA would make it possible to resolve all the problems the country must deal with. First, this is because MINURCA's mandate is time-limited; the draft resolution specifies that the Mission must end on 15 November 1999 at the very latest. Second, this is because, obviously, the responsibility for national reconciliation devolves, above all, on the Central Africans themselves. Finally, this is because it is essential to implement as soon as possible the structural reforms on which the long-term recovery of the Central African Republic depends.

The French delegation believes that the achievement of the commitments made by the President of the Central African Republic in the letter that he addressed to Secretary-General on 23 January 1999 is essential. As was most clearly stated in the statement made on 18 February 1999 on behalf of the Security Council by its President, the success, the future mandate and the continued presence of MINURCA in the Central African Republic are closely linked to the implementation of these commitments. Further, the observable progress in their implementation will be reviewed every 45 days, as set forth in the draft resolution that we will be adopting.

Among the most important points that the Security Council will be taking into account during these evaluations are the pursuit of constructive and consensual dialogue among all the Central African political parties in order to allow for the effective functioning of the new national assembly and calm preparations for free and equitable presidential elections; the continuation of the restructuring of the Central African armed forces; the implementation of economic and financial objectives defined in cooperation with the international financial institutions; and respect for the commitment that was solemnly made by the Central African Government itself — and for which we congratulate it — to avoid involvement in any external conflict.

In this context we do not doubt for a moment that the adoption of this resolution and the extension of the mandate of MINURCA will provide an outstanding opportunity for the authorities and the Central African political parties to make progress in their dialogue and in national reconciliation. Any other attitude would be damaging to the pursuit of the United Nations Mission and to the Central African Republic itself.

Mr. Jagne (Gambia): The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic has been very instrumental in the search for peace in that country. It should also be recognized that the people of the Central African Republic made it possible for the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) to be largely successful in the execution of its mandate. In fact, following his recent trip to Bangui, Assistant Secretary-General Annabi informed the Council that all his interlocutors, including President Patassé, unanimously agreed to keep MINURCA. The President's letter to the Secretary-General recommitting himself to the reforms is a clear testimony to this commitment.

Let us also remember that those reforms are not only political but also economic and financial. Vital international institutions such as the World Bank are also involved. It is needless to refer to the letter of the President of the Bank to this effect. MINURCA's role and those of the other international institutions are mutually reinforcing.

Furthermore, it goes without saying that without the presence of MINURCA, the progress made so far would not have been possible, and therefore we can state with guarded optimism that with the continued assistance of the rest of the international community, the problems of the Central African Republic could be resolved satisfactorily. In this connection, the continued cooperation of all the parties in the Central African Republic is absolutely necessary.

Considering the fact that the overall situation is still volatile, exacerbated by the conflict in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in the light of all the issues raised by the Secretary-General in his report, my delegation is of the strong view that it would be premature to wind up the mandate of MINURCA. Consequently, we agree with the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of MINURCA until 15 November 1999, mindful of the fact that such an extension is tied to a number of conditions and conditionalities. In any case, at this crucial stage when the country is engaged in a process of painful reforms, the least that the Council should do is to support that process.

Mr. Kooijmans (Netherlands): The Netherlands will vote in favour of the draft resolution on the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA), first of all to express its firm support for the positive contribution of MINURCA to the political process in the Central African Republic.

Secondly, the Netherlands welcomes the fact that the draft resolution integrates in a comprehensive way essential aspects of peace-building and reconstruction, such as a transparent electoral process, the restructuring of the armed forces and economic reform.

In this approach, it is indeed essential that the Government of the Central African Republic continue to work closely with the Economic and Social Council, the United Nations Development Programme and the Bretton Woods institutions. The Netherlands expects that important lessons can be learned — and applied elsewhere — from the implementation of this comprehensive approach in the Central African Republic, and in this regard we are looking forward to the progress reports of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Chen Xu (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): China supports the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA). Recently, conflicts have repeatedly broken out in many areas of Africa. However, the Central African Republic has maintained relative stability and has smoothly carried out legislative elections. This is the result of the effort and cooperation of the Government and people of Central African Republic and MINURCA. MINURCA in particular has played a special role in this respect. It has won the widespread appreciation of the people and of various parties in the country. Once again, this has demonstrated that the Security Council is clearly able to do concrete work for African countries and peoples.

China has always maintained that the Bangui Agreements and the National Reconciliation Pact are the bases for bringing about peace and stability in the Central African Republic, and the various sides should fully and faithfully implement them. We fully support the Government and people of the Central African Republic in carrying out reforms in the political, economic, social and security areas. We urge the international community to provide the necessary assistance for this. At the same time, we also believe that such reforms, especially the restructuring of the armed forces, are the internal affairs of a country, and the Security Council should not intervene too much. We therefore hope that, in future consultations, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General will fully seek and respect the views of the host Government.

China sincerely hopes that the various parties in the Central African Republic will settle their disputes soon, smoothly carry out presidential elections and support MINURCA in providing assistance in this respect. Finally, I should like to emphasize the importance of paragraph 16 of the draft resolution. We appeal to the international community to help the Central African Republic to bring about sustainable economic and social development so as to achieve genuine and lasting peace and stability.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): The United States will join the consensus with other Council members in voting to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) until 15 November 1999. Our support reflects our concern over the deteriorating regional security situation in Central Africa and our respect for the Council's strong desire to continue this mission.

It must be clearly noted, however, that our decision to endorse the extension of MINURCA's mission was made despite our deep misgivings concerning the pace of reform and the need for Government-coordinated programmes to improve the political, economic, social and military situation in the Central African Republic. We remain concerned that the Central African Republic Government will not meet its commitments under this draft resolution.

We are, however, mindful of the need not to abandon African peacekeeping at this time of increased conflict on the continent, as well as the need to strengthen democracy in the Central African Republic. We therefore have agreed to one further extension of the mandate of MINURCA until 15 November. In our view this operation should be brief, a temporary window of opportunity during which the Government must implement stabilizing reforms.

In agreeing to this extension, we have two continuing concerns. First, the Government of the Central African Republic must energetically avail itself of this renewed opportunity to institute the kind of reforms that engender long-term stability. This is a task that must be fulfilled by the Government, not by MINURCA peacekeepers. We hold President Patassé and his Government responsible for implementing long-overdue reforms and for meeting the specific benchmarks set forth

in this draft resolution, in accordance with the commitments made by President Patassé in his letter of 23 January to the Secretary-General. If the Government of the Central African Republic fails to meet these commitments, the United States will, in consultation with other Security Council members, seek to review the merits of maintaining a peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic through mid-November.

Secondly, this draft resolution clearly states that MINURCA will end on 15 November. The Security Council and the United Nations Secretariat must begin work now to ensure a smooth transition from peacekeeping to non-assessed peace-building. Any delays in planning for this transition would be counter-productive and would not serve the best interests of the citizens of the Central African Republic. It is vital that the United Nations take steps now to formulate programmes for continued reform after MINURCA departs. Members of the group of Friends of the Central African Republic and United Nations officials must not delay in beginning to formulate a mechanism to ensure that economic restructuring, good-governance reforms, demobilization and military restructuring continue after the peacekeeping forces depart.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Canada.

(*spoke in French*)

Since its inception last year, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) has contributed immensely to the establishment and maintenance of peace and security in the Central African Republic. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the men and women of MINURCA, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for the outstanding service they have provided to the United Nations, to the people of the Central African Republic and to the international community. Their efforts deserve our highest praise.

To date, MINURCA has successfully provided vital assistance in ensuring the security necessary to allow peace to take root firmly in the Central African Republic. Canada is pleased to have been part of this Mission. We are particularly gratified by the crucial role MINURCA played in the successful conduct of legislative elections late last year.

However, we have not yet reached our goal. Much has been achieved over the past year, but many of the security, economic and political problems facing the country are still unresolved. The Central African Republic remains relatively calm and stable, but there is the danger that neighbouring conflicts may spill over into the Central African Republic and undo the progress achieved. Many of the agreed economic and financial reforms have yet to be implemented. Moreover, there remains another vital step to be taken: the conduct of presidential elections. The achievement of free and fair elections will be a concrete sign of progress in political development and a reaffirmation of the basic democratic covenant between the people and the State.

(*spoke in English*)

The draft resolution before us today reflects these realities. It comes as a response to the recommendations of the Secretary-General, which we support and commend. In particular, we agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that MINURCA's continued presence at its current strength and force structure remains critical to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Central African Republic. Our view is that MINURCA will likely remain necessary until the forthcoming presidential elections. Canada anticipates remaining in MINURCA until its core objectives are realized.

That said, Canada firmly believes that the primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace, economic recovery and the conduct of free and fair elections lies not with the United Nations or with MINURCA, but rather with the Government, the political leaders and the people of the Central African Republic. We urge both the Mouvance Présidentielle and the opposition parties to cooperate closely to achieve the resumption of the kind of constructive political dialogue which is indispensable to continuing stability in the Central African Republic.

We expect President Patassé to honour his commitments to comply fully with the Bangui Agreements and the National Reconciliation Pact and to translate these commitments into concrete measures. The success, the future mandate and the ongoing presence of MINURCA are closely linked to the fulfilment of these undertakings, as clearly reflected in the draft resolution before us today. In this regard, we look forward to receiving the periodic reports of the Secretary-General.

We believe that the continued presence of MINURCA is a tangible demonstration of the commitment of the United Nations and the international

community to peace and security in Africa. Canada, as a member of the Security Council and of the group of Friends of the Central African Republic, as well as a troop contributor to MINURCA, is proud to be a part of this effort.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now put to the vote the draft resolution contained in document S/1999/122.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Gabon, Gambia, Malaysia, Namibia, Netherlands, Russian Federation, Slovenia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1230 (1999).

The Security Council has thus concluded the voting procedure.

(*spoke in French*)

The representative of the Central African Republic has asked to speak. I give him the floor.

Mr. Poukré-Kono (Central African Republic): This is my first opportunity to address the Council since you, Sir, assumed the office of the presidency. Permit me to congratulate you. Your tenure of office is almost over, but we have seen how you have performed with dignity, expediency and a great sense of fair play. You have my admiration and respect. I would like also to congratulate your predecessor for a job very well done.

Obviously, in a democracy, it is important for the Government and the opposition to work together and to cooperate in furthering the interests of State. This must be encouraged by the Council and all of us. We should be careful, however, not to be seen as micromanaging the Government and attempting to distribute ministerial and/or parliamentary posts, as such an approach would not be helpful.

Yesterday, the Constitutional Court rendered its decision that those opposition members who defected to the Government side have every right to do so. Therefore, the majority of the President's party in government is now official.

The Bretton Woods group that has been in our country for the past two weeks has concluded its work satisfactorily and has indicated to the Government its agreement to reestablish economic cooperation with us. This morning, I was informed that the first vice-presidency of the National Assembly has been offered to the opposition.

Once again, may I, on behalf of my Government, take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Council for all the help rendered to us at this difficult period of our history. Let me reassure the Council of my Government's determination to fulfil all its obligations under the Bangui Agreements, as well as the commitments made by my President in his letter to the Council.

The President: I thank the representative of the Central African Republic for his kind words addressed to me.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.